



Castle Rackrent



## Castle Rackrent

Maria Edgeworth (1768 - 1849)

"One of the most inspired chronicles written in English" was the verdict of William Butler Yeats on *Castle Rackrent*, first published in 1800. It is recognised as the first true historical novel in English as well as the first Big-House novel. Written at the time of much debate about the Act of Union, which proposed to unite Great

Britain with Ireland, the book satirised the mismanagement of their Irish estates by Anglo-Irish landlords. Maria Edgeworth's writing is informative, entertaining and amusing by turns. Just before publication, extensive footnotes, a glossary and a preface were added, to counteract any negative impact the Edgeworth family feared it might have on The Act of Union. The novel is set in early 1780's Ireland and is narrated by Honest Thady, loyal steward to generations of the Rackrent family. These are: the generous Sir Patrick, the tight fisted Sir Murtagh (married into the Skinflint family), the cruel Sir Kit who locked his wealthy wife up in her room for seven years, and the amiable spendthrift Sir Condy, who has no head for business and a fondness for whisky punch. Together, they have run the estate into debt and disaster. Jason Quirk, Thady's astute son, sorts everything out in the end to his satisfaction – but much to Thady's dismay.

Maria Edgeworth

Running time 05:07:00

Read by Noel Badrian



Cover design by Kathryn Delaney

Castle Rackrent

Maria Edgeworth



Illustration by Christ Hammond from the 1894 edition